

## Message Text

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USICA

FOR FERNANDEZ FROM CLAUSSEN

E.O. 11652: N/A  
SUBJECT: "ATLANTIC NEWS" REPORT ON MBFR

1. FOLLOWING TEXT APPEARED IN "ATLANTIC NEWS" DATED 12  
JULY 1978. BEGIN TEXT:

NOT VERY LIKELY THAT NATO WILL REPLY TO FACT'S LAST  
"MBFR" INITIATIVE BEFORE THE AUTUMN -- (A.N.-N.A.) - AFTER  
NUMEROUS REQUESTS BY THE SOVIET UNION THAT THE NATO  
COUNTRIES GIVE A CONCRETE REPLY QUICKLY TO THE WARSAW  
PACT'S LAST INITIATIVE AT THE VIENNA TALKS ON FORCE  
REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE "MBFR" (I.E. THE LAST SOVIET  
INITIATIVE, SEE A.N. OF 14 AND 16 JUNE), A NATO SPOKESMAN  
MADE SOME IMPORTANT COMMENTS AT THE END OF LAST WEEK AS  
REGARDS THE NATURE OF THESE MOST RECENT REDUCTION PROPO-  
SALS PUT FORWARD BY THE PACT.

SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE ALLIANCE DURING ITS 176TH  
PLENARY SESSION OF THE TALKS, THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR, LUC  
SMOLDEREN, SAID FIRSTLY THAT THE LAST SOVIET PROPOSALS  
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ARE COMPLEX AND REQUIRE A DETAILED EXAMINATION. THERFORE,  
HE SAID, IT IS NOT VERY LIKELY THAT THE NATO COUNTRIES  
WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE A REPLY BEFORE NEXT 20 JULY, THE  
DATE ON WHICH THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE ADJOURNED FOR THE  
SUMMER. IT IS THOUGHT AT NATO THAT THE "MBFR" TALKS WILL  
BE RESUMED IN SEPTEMBER.

SPEAKING IN MORE DETAIL ON THE CONTENT OF THE WARSAW PACT'S MOST RECENT PROPOSALS, THE BELGIAN DELEGATE THEN ACCUSED THE SOVIET BLOC OF GOING BACK ON PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS AS REGARDS THE COMMITMENTS WHICH WILL BE MADE BY THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND CANADA DURING THE FIRST PHASE OF REDUCTIONS. THE USSR IS NOW CALLING FOR BIG COMMITMENTS FROM W. EUROPE AND CANADA FOR THE SECOND PHASE OF FORCE REDUCTIONS EVEN BEFORE THE PROVISIONS FOR THE FIRST PHASE HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED, AMBASSADOR SMOLDEREN SAID. HE ADDED THAT NATO DOES NOT WANT TO NEGOTIATE PHASE TWO IN DETAIL UNTIL AFTER THE FIRST SERIES OF REDUCTIONS HAS BEEN APPLIED BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE USSR. THE SOVIET BLOC IS SEEKING TO "PREDETERMINE THE MAIN CONTENT" OF THE REDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR THE SECOND PHASE, THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR FEELS.

AMB. SMOLDEREN WAS REFERRING TO THE FACT THAT IN ITS LAST REDUCTION PROPOSAL, THE SOVIET UNION INSISTED THAT THE COUNTRIES WHICH ARE NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE FIRST PHASE REDUCTIONS SHOULD MAKE PRECISE COMMITMENTS ON THE TERMS OF THEIR REDUCTIONS DURING THE SECOND "MBFR" PHASE. THUS FAR, THE USSR HAD CONFIRMED ITS REQUEST TO A "COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE" BY THE WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND CANADA TO ENSURE THAT THE FIRST PHASE REDUCTIONS WOULD IN FACT BE FOLLOWED BY REDUCTIONS

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IN THE SECOND PHASE.

NATO HAD OFFERED THIS COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE IN ITS LAST INITIATIVE OF 19 APRIL (SEE A.N. OF THE SAME DATE). NEVERTHELESS, THE PACT WANTED TO GO FURTHER BY REPLYING IN ITS COUNTER-PROPOSAL OF 8 JUNE THAT THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES MUST MAKE A COMMITMENT TO REDUCE THEIR FORCES BY A FIXED PERCENTAGE WHICH WOULD BE STIPULATED IN THE FIRST PHASE AGREEMENT.

FINALLY, MR. SMOLDEREN CONTESTED A STATEMENT MADE DURING THE SAME PLENARY SESSION BY THE BULGARIAN DELEGATE, TODOR DICHEV, WHO SAID THAT THE SOVIET BLOC'S LAST PROPOSALS "GO MORE THAN HALFWAY" TO MEET REQUIREMENTS SET BY THE WEST FOR AN "MBFR" AGREEMENT. "IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY THE EASTERN PROPOSALS MEET THE WEST HALFWAY", MR. SMOLDEREN SAID. AT NATO HEADQUARTERS IN BRUSSELS, THERE HAS BEEN LESS AMBIGUITY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THE EAST'S PROPOSALS WHERE IT IS SAID THAT THE EAST'S LAST POSITION AT THE TALKS DOES NOT REDUCE THE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BY HALF. END TEXT.

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